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FRANK BOGERT

Intervewed by

Patricia Young

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INTERVIEWEE: FRANK BOGERT

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

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Y: This is an interview with Frank Bogert for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on April 16, 1980, at eight thirty in the morning at his home in Palm Springs on Claymore.

All right, let's talk first thing about Thunderbird and your relationship to that.

B: Okay. Are you on?

Y: Yes.

B: Well, what happened was, I was in the Navy in San Francisco. And after the war was over I ended up in Alameda. I was an admiral. And I had a man up there from, that was a real good friend of mine, and I'd gotten his kid fixed up in the Navy pretty well. And he kept saying, "What are you going to do when you get out of the Navy?" And I said, "Well, I want to start a dude ranch."

He said, "Well, I'll put up the money for you." Can you answer the phone? "And you go ahead and buy it and we'll start a dude ranch. Where do you want to do it?" So naturally I wanted to come to Palm Springs because I've lived here all my life. I mean all my life since I was seventeen. So I came down to . . . anyway, I came down here and there was an old guy here, a very famous old bird now named Raymond Cree. And I talked to Raymond Cree first and then I talked to another guy who owned the Limelight was John Chaffey. And I said, "I'm looking for a piece of land out somewheres and I want to make it a dude ranch." So John Chaffey, who was then a real estate man, and so was Ray Cree, Raymond Cree is the one that they named the Raymond Cree School out here. He's been the superintendent of schools for, before this and now he became a real estate man. Incidentally, he developed Smoketree and a lot of land down here. So we went out to look at this piece of land and it was exactly what I wanted and I bought it like that. And a lot of people wonder where the name Thunderbird came from. Well, Ray Cree had called this Thunderbird Ranch before. It was seven hundred and forty acres and I bought it for thirty-four thousand dollars. And it was section eleven, all of

section eleven; some sections are bigger than others. This happened to be a big section because it went back up into the mountains. So I bought the section, and then when I got into the thing, why I had some of my money in it and some of Joe 's money. He was the Joe E Candy Company in San Francisco. And after I got into it, why like I say, we're going to need more money because Joe didn't want to put up that much money. So I got some people named Jason, Kathryn and Bill Jason, they still live out at Thunderbird. In fact, he's one of the fonder members of Thunderbird now and they live up on the hill. And then I got Bill Ginmore, who owned the Ginmore Steel Company in San Francisco, and Mack McDonald and a fellow named Paul Brown from San Francisco. All of them put various amounts of money, so they built down on the flat which is now the golf course, we built a, I mean the clubhouse for the golf course, we built . . . I had Gordon Kauffman, well, first I had Cliff Mayer, who was a very famous architect that did ranch-type houses. I had Cliff Mayer fill it all out, but Cliff's daughter died and so I got Gordon Kauffman who is the architect for the Times Building in Los Angeles and he was the architect for the Santa Anita Racetrack, a world famous

architect. So they laid this out and made a dude ranch out of it. And then I had a stable down on the far end of the, where the houses are, where the first condominiums went in, on the east end of Thunderbird was my stable and tract home. And that's all they had. There was a swimming pool, which is still there, and the clubhouse buildings and the planning room and the bar. And then I went to Banning. There was a hospital in Banning during the war, and I bought the buildings, they were GI buildings, you know, from a hospital there in the Army. And I pulled them down from Beaumont and made quarters for the help out in back. And those are where the snake pit is and the men's locker room out in back of it. So I ran it as a dude ranch, that was in 1946 incidentally, and it was 1947 when I opened it. And I had a roping arena and a stable with about forty horses. And we used to put on breakfast rides and Jim Connors and rodeos and then I had square dances in the dining room, ran it like a regular dude ranch. And it was about 1951, and we were a very successful dude ranch and it was going like a million. Then I had all the land up on the hill and I wasn't doing anything with it, and I kept trying to get people to build up on the hills, so I subdivided it

into eighteen lots, which is the first eighteen lots as you go through the gate there. They were one-acre lots. And I got a guy named Bill Grant to build three houses up there. And a guy named Barnes bought the first house, and then Paul Promm bought the next house, and we sold the three houses up on the hill. But I couldn't get anybody to buy the lots. The idea of living on a dude ranch didn't seem to go. So I went back to New York that summer and I tried it all over the country because we closed up in the summertime. And every place I went people would say, "Well, I love Palm Springs but there's no golf course." And I kept running into, like Dan Boll, the head of the Company in Minneapolis. And he said, "Gee, I'd love to come to Palm Springs because I like it better than anyplace else in the country, but they don't have anything but that little old O'Donnell golf course. So is a good eighteen-hole golf course. So after talking all over and every place I went people wanted golf. So I came back and I tried to promote a golf course. And I talked to everybody in town and the golfers that had O'Donnell, like Ben Shear and Fleet and a lot of people like that. And they all said, "Oh, gosh, we can't build a golf course. It's impossible, you know." And you can't have a year round

golf course because you couldn't grow the grass and all that kind of thing. And everybody fought me on it until finally I got ahold of Johnny Dawson. And Johnny Dawson was then working with Ben Hogan and quite a group and he was trying to build a golf course some place here. He had the same idea. So they went over to look at Dr. Lowman's property across the valley over by Desert Hot Springs, kind of an interesting little start because they were going to buy this golf course. And they'd offered Dr. Lowman four thousand an acre and everything was all set. And Dr. Lowman said, "Well, I don't want to make up my mind today. Come back tomorrow." So as they went home, a wind storm came up which does out there in the valley, and there was, on the tracks and couldn't get across because there was no crossing across the railroad tracks in those days. The only way you could come was on Indian Avenue. They got stuck on Indian Avenue and a train came by, and there they were stuck on the tracks with the wind blowing. And they said, "The heck with this; this is no place to build a golf course." So, the very next day Johnny says, "The heck with Dr. Lowman's property." And I got ahold of them and showed them this, and they said, "By golly, I think we can build a golf course here."

So that's really the beginning of how come it came to be a golf course. So then Johnny and I and Barney Hinkle formed a company, and we bought from my stockholders, Gilmore and Jason and all that group who owned the dude ranch, we bought them out lock, stock and barrel. And we called it, it was an incorporated thing, Thunderbird Ranch, we now called it Thunderbird Ranch and Country Club. So then we went around to raise money to build a golf course. Johnny went up to northern California and to Washington and Oregon. And I went down and Tony Burke got in the act, too, helping us because he was a real estate man, and we talked to people, like I went down to see Rubin Fleet, Major Fleet, in San Diego, was the first person that I got into the thing. I spent three days talking to him. And finally he put up five thousand dollars. And then Johnny went up, he had a lot of trouble getting people up north, but he did get some people. Then he went down to Texas and he got B. B. McDaniels who put up quite a lot of money, about seventy thousand dollars. And it was an awful battle, getting people to come because people didn't believe we could build a golf course. And we all together got about forty people and five thousand apiece. And we finally got a golf course built, but it was by hard work

and a lot of blood, sweat and tears. But after we got, we got Bing Crosby to come in and we got Bob Hope, so now we had Rubin Fleet, who was a very important guy and the Convair Airlines, you know, in San Diego. After that, Hammon, Bing and Bob in. Well then other people came in, it became sort of easy after that. But the way we got people in, we tried to sell them a lot up on the hill. Johnny Dawson's idea was this one to sell a lot up on the hill for, we'd give them a package. For five thousand dollars they could have a lot on the hill plus five thousand dollars in the company. Those lots are now selling from two hundred and fifty thousand. The other day I saw one for sale for four hundred and fifty thousand up on the hill. We were going to give them to them for five thousand a lot. But it was a struggle, you know, nobody wanted it. And we finally built the golf course. And how they did it, we got the, there's a lot of unsung heroes that people don't even remember now, but there's a guy named Bill Abernathy who had the pipe business. And Bill was a very close friend of mine. And Bill put up all the pipe, about three hundred thousand dollars worth of pipe and let us pay for it when we could, which we did over a period of years after that. But he had confidence enough

in us to let us have the pipe on credit. And then we got a guy named Becker who owned the Franklin Life to loan us three hundred thousand dollars from Franklin Life to build the rest of the golf course. A lot of people have forgotten Becker, too. Without him there never would have been a golf course, you know. And Bill Abernathy wasn't even a golfer. He was a horse bug friend of mine, I mean a riding friend of mine. And so then we ran it as a golf course, and I was the manager. And Barney Hinkle and Tony Burke were the real estate men. And Johnny Dawson was the president. And that was 1951. And I stayed there for eight years, and finally got sick and tired of . . . I still had my stable down there at the other end. And my idea was . . . one reason I left Thunderbird was because my idea was different than the rest of them. My idea was to have a complete family club, so I had something to do for the mama and the papa, and I wanted to put tennis in. I couldn't ever get the golfers to put tennis in because golfers are funny people. They want golf and golf alone. They didn't even want women playing for the most part. I wanted to have a stable for all the little kids and activities for kids, and make it a family club, for completely well-rounded family club.

So I just quietly left because I couldn't do it because all the golfers that were by in, they were old guys who wanted pure golf. And that was the reason I left and I went in and managed El Mirador Hotel. And that was about 1960, I think. But I was there for eight years before I moved into Palm Springs. My home is in here, but I was going out to work every day, but that's about the story. And you'll hear all kinds of stories about Thunderbird, about who started it and who did what, but that's about as true as you can get. Of course, Johnny Dawson was the real hero of the thing, because Johnny, being a golfer, I don't know nothing about golf, I was a horseman all my life, never played golf, but I managed a couple of country clubs up in San Francisco, so I know a lot about clubs and club management. But Johnny was an amazing guy to get people interested. He was an internationally known person and if Johnny was in it, everybody figured that it had to be good, you know. So Johnny really should get an awful lot of credit for, you know, starting Thunderbird, which he did as a golf course. And what else do you need to know now?

Y: I was curious. You said a lot of people felt that it couldn't get off the ground as a golf course. What was their objection?

B: Well, number one, people didn't think that Tom could afford an eighteen-hole golf course. They didn't think we could get enough members for an eighteen-hole golf course. They didn't think we could grow grass out there because the year round. Nobody before had had bermuda grass all summer, which is your base for your golf course, and then in the winter you plant forty-two thousand pounds of rye which keeps it green all winter. We were the first one to really make a year-round golf course like that. O'Donnelly was to be just a golf course in the wintertime, you know. And mostly the idea was that, well, there was another golf course in Indio that Jackie Cochran's husband had, you know, and what was his name, I can't even think of it. He owned Atlas Company. He came over to see me when we were starting the golf course. And he said, "Boy, you're making a big mistake, you'll never make it. You can't make money out of a golf course. There's no way you can do it." So what our idea was, we were the first ones to ever do this, we put lots all around the golf course and sold the lots on the golf course, and also we had the lots up on the hill. But the lots on the golf course sold just like that. Everybody wanted a lot on the golf course. And I kept saying, "You don't want to be down here on the golf course. It's going

to be much better up on the hill. But we couldn't sell them; they wouldn't go up on the hill. It took a long time to talk people into doing it. Another thing that's kind of interesting, Johnny came in one day to see me and he said, "You know, we ought to have a wall or something along that hill." You know. So I got two little Mexicans. A guy named Contreras and some other guy, I can't remember his name, two littleold guys. And I bought them an old truck for five hundred dollars. And I had a road that went up, just a dirt road that went up, on the hill, and I got, they'd go up and gather rocks on the hill and built that wall. And they built that wall from one length of Thunderbird clear to the other. You can only see parts of it now where it's still there. But it hasn't got a lick of cement in it anyplace. It's just laid up dry wall like, you know, like we do down in Mexico. And it took them about a year to build it. And kind of zigzaged it around to make it look interesting, you know. The other thing was that there was a freeway going through there. And at that time when the state had a freeway all set to go for seventeen million dollars. It was going to bypass Palm Springs and go out that way. So I had to give them seventy more feet there. So now, after the people in

Palm Springs didn't want the freeway, they abandoned it, and now they got that seventy feet back. So that's the reason that wall was set back so far up on the hill. Now you notice they're building houses right down even, tore the wall down, and built down toward the road.

Y: So you go from 111 on up the hill then? That was part of Thunderbird Country Club.

B: Yes. It set like, well, being square like this, and 111 goes across it at an angle so this piece down here, and it goes across like that and all this up here. So in order to have enough money, I mean have enough land, to build a golf course, we had to have a hundred and twenty acres. We bought eighty acres from a gal named Ruth Warburton who had the Red Roof Ranch next door. And that went out onto the east eighty acres. And that's where you see all those houses going that way where Phil Harris and all of them live out there.

Y: Oh.

B: Phil Harris built the, Phil Harris and Milt Hicks built the first two houses on the golf course. And that was out on the cul-de-sac out on the east end.

Y: Is that the same Hicks that's in town here?

B: Yes. Milt Hicks is, well, his father built the water

company down here and owned the water company, and they owned the builders supply and everything. And Milt was one of our first pioneers and he was probably the most popular guy in town. He was Mr. Golf if anybody ever was. And interesting thing, too, a lot of people don't realize, as I say, that Ray Cree had called this Thunderbird Ranch before we even started. Everybody wondered where you got the name. What I was looking for was a name for a place that you could make a logo of, you know. You take, for instance, Tamarsk, you can't make a logo of it. El Dorado, there's no such thing as an El Dorado. And you name any golf course around, they really aren't good names, you know. The Canyon Country Club and this, but Thunderbird was one thing you could make a logo of. There was a Thunderbird. So I got a little gal in Los Angeles who I'd been to UCLA with, and she was an art major. And I had her come down and I said, "I want a thunderbird that's different than any thunderbird that's ever been made that I want to be originally our, just our thunderbird." So she took the, I gave her a whole lot of pictures of thunderbirds from the Pueblo Indians and the Canadian Indians and the Alaskan Indians and every Indian tribe in the United States had a thunderbird. So she took

this sort of a combination of all of them and designed this little thunderbird, which is still the insignia up here, you know. I had an awful fight with people to keep them from changing it because I wanted it, if you're going to have a logo, it has to be exactly the way it is. Everybody keep wanting to add to it or subtract from it or something, but thank God we finally got them so it's exactly the way it was. But her name was Christine Vehee and she really designed that design, you know. And it's the same logo they have today. But I keep saying that every time you have a, if you have something where you can have a logo that is something, you've got a good combination, you know.

Y: What about the Red Roof Ranch next door?

B: That was it, that we bought from Ruth Warburton. And before that, it had belonged to Phil Boyd that was the first mayor of Palm Springs. And he used to raise tomatoes and strawberries. He had a Japanese gardener and he raised tomatoes and strawberries. So I bought some land out there. Incidentally, the land around there in those days we could buy for . . . we paid Ruth Warburton a thousand dollars an acre. And when you think that I bought the whole section for thirty-four thousand, too,

and now the lots, as I say, are selling for four hundred and fifty thousand. But then I bought some land across the street from it, and I got this same little Japanese gardener that Phil Boyd had to raise strawberries and tomatoes. I was going to be a farmer. And the first year we had a freeze that never happened in Palm Springs in a hundred years. Froze all my strawberries and all my tomatoes just as they were ripe and ready to go, you know. Froze all the bougainvillea and all the hibiscus and everything we had around the place.

Y: Is that where the animal hospital is now?

B: No, that's across the street.

Y: Where did you say you bought your property?

B: Well, it was over where the springs is now, over on that side of the street, you know. Dr. Dollard bought the land afterward. It was on the road that goes on over to Tamarsk, you know, next to Mrs. Lake's property. The land that was Mrs. Lake's was right north of us, you know. She had three hundred and fifty acres, which has now been bought by the Springs, and they're making it into a golf course. She had date trees and she was my neighbor. When we first lived out there, when I first started Thunderbird, there was only Mrs. Lake and ours

was the only thing out there. There wasn't anything else in there. And then on over farther was Kersten's property, who had a date ranch, you know, that now is where the springs and that Irwin Shumann bought it from Kersten. And it's now all the springs.

Y: Wasn't Hank Gogerty out there, too?

B: Hank was out, well, he had his little airport on beyond which is just off of Bob Hope. He was quite a bit farther down from us. And he had the airport and his Desert Aire Hotel he called it. And when I'd ride, we used to ride over to, well, you could ride all over that country in those days, and we'd ride over to Hank Gogerty's and have lunch. And then we'd ride on over to have, to the Malone Ranch, which was beyond Hank Gogerty's about four or five miles, which is down at the end of Clancey Lane, which is now the Monterey Country Club. That was our pretty riding trail down the wash and over to Malone's. Hank Gogerty, incidentally, after 1960, Hank and I started to build a racetrack out there on his property. I was the president of the Desert Turf Club. It was a quarter-horse racetrack. And we were going to build it right in there where Eisenhower Hospital was. It was going to be a quarter-horse track. The reason we didn't build it was it took us, we

tried to incorporate Rancho Mirage and we couldn't. And the county turned us down on our racetrack. And we had to sue the county, and we finally won the case and got permission to build it. And then we got it through the racing board, but that was about the time of the Korean War and everything. And just as we started to raise money, why the money market, just about like it is today, went kaboom. So we lost the thing and never did build the racetrack. But we spent a bundle, Hank and I, to put a track in there. That was after I'd left Thunderbird in the El Mirador.

Y: What can you tell me when you were mayor of Palm Springs and watching the development in the cove area; what was going on in Indian Wells at the time when you, from the time you were in Thunderbird? And I know Johnny Dawson sort of started moving down toward Indian Wells.

B: Well, it's kind of an interesting thing, as I said, Thunderbird was the first golf course. And right after that, boy, and they started springing up one right after another, until when you think that's only forty-six is what, about thirty years ago. Well, fifty, it was 1950, about fifty-three when we built the golf course. So that's thirty years. And we've got some forty golf

courses now, you know. But the next one to be built was Tamarsk. And then Indian Wells. And then El Dorado. And they all stem from the people from Thunderbird, you know, that went over, you know, went out and spun off. Now Paul Promm and Milt Hicks and Eddie Susella and a group built the Indian Wells and Desi Arnaz. And I managed the El Mirador for about three years. And then Desi Arnaz built the hotel. He wanted to build a hotel out there. And Desi was a very close friend of mine. So I took the job of building his hotel and getting it set and get a manager for him and everything. And I just handled it for two years until I got it all built. But the Desi Arnaz Hotel is right on the corner of Indian Wells Country Club. So I was pretty closely associated with Indian Wells, and worked with Eddie Susella and Paul Promm and all of them that started that one. Then after that a group, Ross Clark and Johnny Dawson and a whole other group bought, Farmer Page had a ranch in there, and they bought Farmer Page's Ranch and made El Dorado. But by this time, they could get people in at fifty thousand apiece. That's what it cost to get in El Dorado at that time. Me and the stockholders, about seventeen people all got together and bought that and built El Dorado. But it

was always people, as I say, that stemmed from Thunderbird, you know. It was the Thunderbird that built Indian Wells. The Thunderbird group that built El Dorado.

Y: So Shadow Mountain remained really the only, in the early days, the only family club.

B: Yes. Shadow Mountain was, while I was building Thunderbird originally, the dude ranch, Cliff Henderson was building Shadow Mountain Club. And we worked very closely together. Cliff Henderson had a brother, Phil, who was really the going guy when it came to building. Cliff was the promoting kind of a guy and Phil was the guy that did the work, and so we worked very closely together, you know, trying to get things done. And the interesting thing was that if you notice Thunderbird, there's no commercial on the highway. I was the only, and when I think of it now, we were pretty farsighted because we didn't let any commercial strip zoning go on the highway. And I used to argue with Cliff and he said, well, it's only temporary, you know, we're going to have this strip zoning on the businesses along the highway. Let them put in temporary buildings because he wanted to have a village back in there where El Paseo is now. But they didn't do it because you let them build on the highway and you couldn't get rid of

them once they were on the highway, you know. But if you'll notice, if you drive from here out to Indio, the section going through Thunderbird is the only piece of land that hasn't got commercial all along the highway because I didn't want any. I wanted to keep it clean for residential, you know. And what should have happened at Palm Desert, they should have kept everything off the highway and had a road that turned in and had a nice little village like Scottsdale that was commercial that you turned into, you know. Instead of having it all this strip zoning along the highway. I think the worst thing you can really have is like Highway lll, which it's turned into now, which is junk all the way down, you know. It could have been nice, scenic highway and turn into villages, you know. Turn into Rancho Mirage. Rancho Mirage, incidentally, was Ronald Button and a guy named Culver were subdividing and it was just nothing but a raw subdivision in those days. And they were selling lots and things there. But they were the two pioneers, you might say, of Rancho Mirage. And Palm Desert, when I first, well, when I first knew Palm Desert, was on the north side was Gillette Ranch, and there was Palm Village, they called it. Somebody started a little subdivision

there, and everything on the south side was during the war was where Patton used to bring his tanks up to repair them. It was a repair area for tanks. There really wasn't anything on the south side, just that big old cone in there. And Cliff saw that and saw the possibilities and really made something out of it, you know.

Y: I was going to ask you something on that. (laughter) Took away

B: The interesting thing was Indian Wells, my brother is a herbitologist and was at the Museum of Natural History in New York. And when we were at UCLA, we were both zoology majors. And every weekend we'd come down to Indian Wells and camp and catch rattlesnake. And there used to be, because there was a lot of, it was kind of, the water had been, that had been an Indian well there originally, the old well where you walk down into it. And it was a lot of mesquite country and it was just ideal for rattlesnakes. And we used to get the big old diamond-backed ones out there. I used to go out and catch seven or eight of them a night. I think we caught them all because there's not a one left out there anymore, I mean of the Texas diamond-backed,

It's a different rattlesnake than we have here. This is a pacific rattlesnake, the rest of them in here. But the is a Texas diamond-back, and we got several of them out there six feet long and that big around, you know, like three inches across. We used to track them down on the dunes up here. You'd go about five o'clock and you'd walk along and you'd see a track. And you'd follow it until you catch the old snake just about coming out at night at about five o'clock. But I camped at Indian Wells, oh, every weekend, oh, for a couple of three years, just catching snakes out there. I believe we caught so many of them that there's none left. (chuckle) By the time we started developing, there wasn't any left out there.

Y: Why Indian Wells?

B: Just seemed to be an ideal, well, number one, snakes have to be where there's a rat population and there were a lot of kangaroo rats and a lot of rabbits and stuff in there and it was just a nice . . . of course, we caught sidewinders all over the whole desert. But right in there was a good, ideal place for rattlesnakes. You know, Indian Wells is quite an historic thing. I've got a picture in here of, on the old Bradshaw Trail, where it

used to come down through Palm Springs. The first stop was Palm Springs which is And the next stop was Indian Wells. And the rest of it, there wasn't anything on the map at all, but Indian Wells in the early 1860s was an important stop because there was water and it was good protection back in the cove area.

Y: The county had put in a well, too, hadn't they at that point? It seems to me I read . . .

B: I don't know, but you see, being farther down and near Sheila, well, it was right close to the water, you know. That's why the Indians, they just went down in about forty feet, and in those days the water table was a lot higher. Actually when I built a well at Thunderbird, we only went down, we were pumping water from about sixty feet. The water table has dropped a lot, you know, since those days. So down at Indian Wells, it was even that much closer to sea level so you didn't have to go very far to water.

Y: Was there a school in Indian Wells when you used to go out there?

B: Nothing. Nothing at all. It was just old desert, you know. And a camping ground where people used to camp.

Y: What was the attraction that people would camp there,

just because there was water there?

B: Just because there was water. See, the Bradshaw Trail when this guy Bradshaw started it, when you think that this pass is the most natural pass in the world to come to California in, and the Anza he went over the top of the mountain and real rugged country and all the pioneers went over through Cajon Pass and over the mountain and everything else. And here's a perfectly natural pass they could have right through the mountains. But nobody knew it was here for a long time. And one reason was that they had a lot of desert out this way to go through. So Bradshaw, he wanted to get to the gold mines at Search Life and on over to Arizona and to the gold mines out there, so he found a route where he could come through Banning, Beaumont, and Potrero Flats and everything and down through here to Palm Springs where the Agua Caliente water was. And then out there they found water all the way across. So that started the first opening up of this pass where the Bradshaw Trail was just a wagon train trail, freight line trail. Then after that they put the railroad through here. But it's kind of interesting to think this is the easiest pass in California to get through and nobody ever used it because it was pretty rugged

desert this way to go through, you know. Not any more rugged than they had up north, though, because they had to come through to come to San Bernardino, from Las Vegas to San Bernardino is about as rugged a desert as you can find, you know.

Y: That's true. I understood that, how we doing on time? How are you doing on time?

B: Pretty good except I got to eat breakfast pretty soon.

Y: Okay. In terms of Rancho Mirage, I understand that a man named Blankenhorn, Mack Blankenhorn, had been one of the main instigators of development, early development, there.

B: Yes. I remember the name Blankenhorn, but by the time I was fussing with it out there, it was Culverter and Ronald Button. Ronald Button is still alive. You could talk to him, you know.

Y: Do you know where he is?

B: He's out there.

Y: Oh, he's still living out there.

B: Sure, he lives out there, yes. Just got married awhile ago.

Y: I was told he was in Beverly Hills.

B: But he's out there every once in awhile. You can call him. I've got his phone number and stuff, you know.

Y: Oh, great.

B: But Ron, he could remember everything about who had it before he did, you know.

Y: Okay. What about the White Sun Guest Ranch? Do you remember much about that? Was that in any kind of competition with you?

B: No. They were just about starting. Dangler and his wife had that, and they were just a little bitsy place. They didn't have any horses or anything and really didn't get going until after we'd made it into a golf course. When I was having a dude ranch, there was a dude ranch at Deep Well, and Deep Well Ranch and Smoketree Ranch were three dude ranches.

Y: Where was Deep Well?

B: Well, right over here where the condominiums are now, Deep Well Condominiums.

Y: Oh.

B: You know where Elmer's Pancake House, that was the entrance.

Y: Yes.

B: To Deep Well Ranch. They had a stable and everything there. In fact, that's the first place I came to when I came to Palm Springs in 1927 was Deep Well Ranch. Charlie

Doyle started it and wanted to get some horses. So I brought some horses down there.

Y: At Thunderbird Ranch, did you have places for people to stay? Had you built

B: Oh, yes. We had the same rooms that are still there. We built thirty-six rooms, and the building is still there exactly the way we built it. It's been changed around, it's kind of hard to recognize, but there's one ring goes out this way that's rooms and another one goes over this way and another out this way. And they're still the main rooms at Thunderbird, those thirty-six rooms. They were nice big rooms and well built and well furnished. We were, Thunderbird, was a very deluxe dude ranch, you know. It wasn't corny. A lot of people would come that, well, I had all the actors, all kinds of people, you'd be amazed. Like what's Liza Minnelli's mother, you know, used to be a singer. She came down with her husband, Sid Luft, and, oh, Bob Taylor and his wife. I had all the actors and everything came down there because it was a nice place to stay, you know. It was kind of Who's Who in America who stayed there in those days. Well, I don't know what else to tell you. I could talk to you for hours about, you know, little things that happened at Thunderbird,

but basically, you've got the facts of it. I've got a, I just found a book, turn . . .

END OF INTERVIEW